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ABSTRACT

According to recent research findings, the average teacher age continues to rise, with middle-aged teachers now dominating school staff. Although the literature deals with teacher evaluation, managing incompetent teachers, and documenting teachers for dismissal, there is little information about teachers who are reluctant to learn and grow. This "Bulletin," based on a 2-year study, attempts to explain why some middle-aged teachers continue to grow and others do not. Chapter 1 profiles a reluctant teacher, defines the term, and outlines five research questions concerned with adult developmental stages, learner styles, attitudes, behavior change, personality types, the value of self-evaluation, and the role of past circumstances in shaping behavior and attitudes. Chapter 2 summarizes literature on adult developmental styles, adults as learners, staff development, and teacher change as a framework for viewing reluctant teachers. Chapter 3 highlights the study's findings. Awareness of adult developmental stages did not significantly influence teachers' receptivity to change, nor did transitional periods offer growth-producing activities. The learner characteristics of growth-seeking teachers differed from those of reluctant teachers regarding persistence, motivations, authority-oriented learning, and structure. Self-assessment confirmed what teachers already knew about themselves and did not provide new insights. Teachers' attitudes toward collegial relationships, curricular changes, district mandates, and their personal growth determined their growth-seeking behavior. Recommendations and researcher reactions are provided. (53 references) (MLH)

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RELUCTANT TEACHERS

Why Some Middle-Aged Teachers Fail to Learn and Grow

Michele A. Howser

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Preface

As middle-aged teachers comprise an increasingly larger proportion of the total teacher population, it is important for administrators to be aware of the special needs of aging, experienced teachers. Although there is a great deal of literature that deals with teacher evaluation, managing incompetent teachers, and documenting teachers for dismissal, there is little information about why some experienced teachers are reluctant to learn and grow. During her years as a principal, Michele Howser often attempted and sometimes failed to rehabilitate these experienced, middle-aged teachers into effective educators. These experiences led her to write her doctoral dissertation on this topic.

To develop hypotheses concerning so-called "reluctant" teachers, the author drew on research and theory about midlife developmental stages, adults as learners, and staff development. She then formulated research questions designed to try to discover why some teachers learn and grow and others do not. In this Bulletin, which is based on her dissertation, *Reluctant Teachers: Why Some People Learn and Grow and Others Do Not,* she discusses the findings of her study and provides recommendations regarding how administrators can encourage learning and growth in their experienced staff.

Howser, who has experience as both a teacher and a school administrator, received her doctoral degree from the University of Oregon's Division of Educational Policy and Management in August 1989. She is currently superintendent of Riverdale School District, Portland, Oregon.

Philip K. Piele
Executive Secretary

Introduction

Public school faculties are older than they used to be. According to Dembowski and Gay (1980), the average teacher age continues rising. Krupp (1989) sees middle-aged (35-55-year-old) teachers dominating school staffs. With the aging, experienced staff in mind, this Bulletin attempts to explain why some middle-aged teachers continue to learn and grow while others do not.

Currently, an abundance of literature deals with teacher evaluation, managing incompetent teachers, and documenting teachers for dismissal (Bridges 1984, Carey 1981, Glatthorn 1984, Stanley and Popham 1988). That literature addresses teachers who should not be in the classroom, the ones performing below minimum standards. It does not explain experienced teachers who are reluctant to learn and grow. In order to understand why some middle-aged teachers are reluctant to change, research and theory about midlife developmental stages, adults as learners, and staff development must be considered independently of the teacher evaluation process.

In this Bulletin, I use the results of a study I conducted while pursuing a doctoral degree at the University of Oregon to understand middle-aged "reluctant" teachers and suggest ways that their attitudes and behaviors might be altered without using intervention efforts like plans of assistance, which often have negative, even devastating, consequences. In chapter 1, I explain in story form why I became interested in reluctant teachers. I also define *reluctant teachers* and share the questions that generated my research and study.

Chapter 2 summarizes literature on adult developmental stages, adults as learners, and staff development and teacher change as a framework for viewing reluctant teachers. Chapter 3 highlights the study's findings. The final chapter discusses what I learned and offers recommendations for administrators to consider when dealing with reluctant teachers.

Chapter 1

What Is a 'Reluctant Teacher'?

As I walked into his classroom the last day of school, I knew by the feeling in my stomach the impending scene would not be pleasant. "Dave," I said, "I have nothing against you personally. I never have. I want to wish you the best and let you know I sincerely hope everything works out." I moved to shake his hand and was stopped by his disbelieving look. "How can you even dare to stand there and say that to me after what you have done; you've ruined my life." In anger, Dave turned, left the classroom, and walked away from a twenty-year teaching career. My extensive intervention attempts to rehabilitate Dave, an experienced, middle-aged teacher, into an effective educator failed after two years. I ended up with a solid dismissal case and Dave ended up without a job.

Dave caught my attention during the initial months of my new principalship. As with all the teachers that first year, I made frequent and informal visits to their classrooms, viewing their curriculum organization and observing their instructional style. I tried to appear nonthreatening and friendly, projecting an interest and curiosity in what was happening instructionally in the school. At first I did not document any observations, but instead talked informally with the teachers about their activities and interaction. I sought their own perceptions of what transpired. That process occurred several times with each teacher, including Dave, before I wrote formal evaluations.

Establishing a good working relationship with the teachers became critical in helping them to feel more comfortable with the evaluation process. Over time, the teachers grew accustomed to the room visits and accepted my interest in teaching/learning processes. Educational dialogues surfaced in our school conversations.

Repeatedly, I expressed my beliefs about supervision/evaluation. Teacher evaluation, the process used for instructional improvement and professional growth, is a significant responsibility we have as educators. I practiced what I preached. I devoted the largest percentage of my administrative time to teacher observations, instructional strategy conferencing, and formal/informal discussions on how students learn and what worked best. I incorpo-

rated peer coaching techniques, used small groups to hash out instructional techniques, and ran checklists on student responses and task behaviors. I recorded questioning strategies and videotaped lessons, providing teachers many and varied opportunities to reflect on their teaching. Miniworkshops, presented during staff development sessions, shared current literature and theories on instructional improvement and professional renewal. I assumed that by treating people professionally and with respect solid working relationships and shared goals would result.

The teachers grew familiar with my presence in their classrooms; the resulting educational dialogue strengthened our building's approach to teaching. The evaluation process became a valid, viable experience that assumed new meaning for the staff. The opportunities to react and respond to the teaching/learning process in detail evolved into a positive experience. I felt success with that method with everyone—that is, everyone except Dave.

Dave showed no interest in examining his strengths and weaknesses as a teacher. He did not want to look at his overall teaching or identify areas for growth. He stated he did not have the time nor the personal desire to reflect on his own performance, especially since he felt everything was "okay." He understood the evaluation policy of the district and acknowledged the steps and paperwork required. Nevertheless, he did not view the evaluation process as a significant part of his career or one demanding much emphasis. In fact, he suggested I was not making optimal use of my time by devoting a significant number of hours to observing teachers' performances.

I recognized Dave, as other teachers like him, lacked the training and skills necessary to analyze his teaching behavior. But Dave also lacked interest in learning how to engage in self-evaluation or in the reflective process. I viewed teaching as a complex operation involving a number of components. I realized teachers had limited opportunities to pause in their busy routine and ruminate on their classroom/professional behavior. However, the majority of teachers with whom I worked wanted and demanded meaningful conversations about their performance. Since Dave showed little reaction to my feedback as an evaluator, I structured opportunities for him to receive teacher and student feedback, hoping those perceptions would motivate him to critique his performance.

Unfortunately, this also proved to be ineffective. Dave's indifference to self-evaluation and reflection became obvious. He appeared unwilling, reluctant, and suspicious of using the evaluation procedure as a tool for instructional improvement. He did not want to change or grow and I could not influence his attitude.

Because of Dave's reluctance to engage in self-evaluation and to consider my and others' comments seriously, we moved from an informal working relationship to a structured, conventional relationship involving a plan of assistance. That strategy included a detailed, clearly written, step-by-step plan for Dave to follow to strengthen his areas of weakness. Written with the assistance of a labor attorney, we made sure the goals were valid and the rec-

ommendations for success reasonable.

I honestly believe we offered every type of support, assistance, and encouragement possible to aid Dave in reaching the goals specified on the plan. That assistance included modeling teaching strategies, sending Dave to observe other teachers outside the district, paying for a college credit class to enhance his instruction, and providing release time so he could plan and organize his lessons. Technical assistance incorporated goal setting, instructional input (or "how to") sessions, and structuring opportunities for practice and feedback. After one and one-half years, I observed little improvement in Dave's teaching performance and more aversion to change.

Dave became my "reluctant teacher." His behavior reflected a low motivation for success, an inability to be a self-starter, a hesitance to incorporate self-evaluation or evaluative comments from others, a lack of trust/faith in the "system," an aversion to recognizing and accepting change, an unwillingness to focus on problem areas, and a reluctance to be responsible for providing a rich learning environment and positive teaching practices. Those behaviors worked to undermine Dave's ability to be successful in accomplishing the goals.

No matter how much we wanted Dave to improve and be successful, we failed because of Dave's refusal to go beyond his status quo. Dave's refusal to change and grow ended his twenty-year teaching career. Professionally, I followed every step of teacher improvement practices. Outwardly, I successfully removed a "reluctant teacher" from our school. But on a personal level, I felt I missed "something," some key that would have opened up Dave, broken down his resistance, and reduced his reluctance to change.

Reluctant Teachers Defined

In many ways, Dave typified middle-aged, experienced "reluctant teachers" I have encountered since becoming an administrator. The reluctant teacher is not a new phenomenon; it is a new name for a group of experienced teachers whose presence is always felt in schools.

Reluctant teachers can be found in any school and in any district. They are typically middle-aged (thirty-five to fifty-five years old), experienced teachers (fifteen to twenty-five years of teaching). They are stagnant in their professional growth and resistant to change. Others view them as "frozen in their routine." Reluctant teachers have hundreds of reasons for not changing and are comfortable with the way things are "right now." Often much of their energy is invested in activities other than teaching. They have been called "coasters," and display the attitude that there is not a whole lot left for them to learn. They are teachers who go through the motions of teaching day in and day out, but are not interested in change or growth. They are the teachers who have "retired," yet remain in the classroom.

Plans of Assistance—Effective or Ineffective?

As a result of experiencing the failure to move teachers into growth-producing situations, I questioned the whole procedure used to assist teachers in improving their performance. I wondered if any plan of assistance, defined by Carey (1981) as a systematic and intense way of working with teachers having problems, actually could be effective in facilitating change or improving teacher performance. Out of curiosity I interviewed Nancy Hungerford, a school attorney known for her extensive experience working with administrators who have teachers on plans of assistance. I wanted to find out the success rates of teachers who have been formally requested to change their instructional performance.

Working as a school attorney since 1981, Hungerford counted at least 105 certificated plans of assistance in which she has been involved. According to Hungerford (personal interview, 1988), most of those plans involved experienced teachers in their forties and fifties, equally men and women. According to Hungerford, of those more than one hundred plans of assistance, few proved successful in changing and improving teacher performance.

> In terms of how many permanent teachers have succeeded on these plans, I would say that by the time I am called in, there haven't been very many successful plans of assistance—maybe a 20% success rate for permanent teachers. That doesn't mean the rest got fired. There are a variety of things that can happen. Some (teachers) can and do retire. Are they on the point of being dismissed? Well, sometimes yes and sometimes no. When some teachers start getting pressured for better performance, they instead make a decision to leave. Many of them resign, but again, were they on the point of dismissal? No, I've had a lot of situations where people were placed on a plan and two weeks or six weeks later resign. Then I've had other outcomes in cases where the teacher may have ended up taking a medical leave, or end up filing for PERS disability or worker's compensation claims. So in some cases, if there is a related medical, mental or physical problem, there will be another outcome. But the ultimate outcome is that the teacher is no longer in the classroom.

Hungerford's accounts confirmed my personal experiences of plans of assistance not changing experienced, middle-aged teacher attitudes or behaviors. Hungerford added she noticed two types of attitudes held by teachers who are placed on plans of assistance.

> Attitude may be the biggest factor in succeeding. You have "Type A" teachers, who take the position they want to improve, are going to do what it takes, and are going to accept the administration's suggestions and *really* work on them. They do not drag their feet. Many times those people stay. They don't necessarily become wonder teachers. There are very few teachers who go on plans of assistance who are

ever going to end up in the top quarter. There have been a few, but they do so largely because of their attitude and tolerance to remain in the system. They learn to do the things that are needed to do so they don't draw the parent complaints. And so they do become better instructors.

The other group of teachers, "Type B," are half-and-half. It seems there are quite a few who are heavily into denial or turning the issue into a battlefield. They come up with alternatives or explanations in their own minds as to why they are on a plan of assistance.

I think people who spend a lot of energy denying, finding alternative explanations, attacking, or just refusing to see the problem are the people who tend not to get better.

Of those teachers Hungerford also said,

I suspect that behind a lot of teachers are people who really don't like teaching or kids, but are kind of stuck. This also has to do with their age and experience level. They are at a point where they, from an income standpoint, can't go out and face getting another job; they have family obligations and so forth. It's very difficult to make a career change. Plus, most of them have been in the teaching profession as long as they have had a work life. What else are they going to do?

What else are they going to do? How about learn and grow? I believe promoting teachers' continued professional growth is the most significant responsibility we have as educators. I believe teachers can learn and grow. I am no longer interested in spending the time, blood, and emotion necessary to dismiss "reluctant" teachers.

What I Wanted to Learn about Reluctant Teachers

My desire to solve the mystery of why some teachers learn and grow and others do not led me to the University of Oregon, where I spent two years studying this issue. I hoped to end up with a clear picture of why some teachers are growth-seeking and others reluctant.

To gain both general information and specific details about why some teachers grow while others stagnate, I used intensive interviewing and statistical analysis. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to answer why some middle-aged, experienced teachers learn and grow and others do not. Interview responses were tape-recorded, transcribed, analyzed, and categorized, yielding qualitative data. Four self-assessment tests, described below, yielded quantitative data on personality types, learning preferences, behavior, and attitude.

Thirty-two experienced, middle-aged teachers identified as either growth-seeking or reluctant by their building principals participated in the research. The subjects, all public school teachers K-12, are employed in three

different metropolitan school districts. Of the sixteen growth-seeking teachers, six are elementary teachers, five are middle school teachers, and five are high school teachers. Of the sixteen reluctant teachers, six are elementary school teachers, five are middle school teachers, and five are high school teachers. All thirty-two teachers had three interviews each and completed the four self-assessment instruments.

The Research Questions

Comparing growth-seeking and reluctant teachers, I tried to answer five research questions:

1. Will awareness of adult developmental stages influence teachers' receptivity to change? Are teachers in transition periods more open to learning and growing opportunities?

Adults are continually growing and changing as they deal with developmental issues involved in their life cycles. Research and theory on adult developmental stages support that statement. Nevertheless, teachers typically are unaware of developmental theories and issues involved in their middle-aged developmental stages. If given a developmental framework that identifies issues of adulthood, specific life tasks, and characteristic stances, I wondered if middle-aged teachers may acquire new ways of viewing experiences, and if those new frameworks might motivate them toward personal or professional growth. Second, I wanted to discover if transition periods of adult development, often characterized in the literature as turbulent and problematic, thrust teachers into growth-producing situations.

An interview format was used to address research question number 1. Teachers' responses were recorded and compared.

2. What is the relation between teachers' learner styles and their attitudes toward change? Do growth-seeking teachers have different learner characteristics than reluctant teachers?

Using the Productivity Environmental Preference Survey (Price, Dunn, and Dunn 1979), I assessed the teachers' individual learning styles in *cognitive* areas (such as motivation, persistence, responsibility) and *affective* areas (such as likes to work with others, alone, or in pairs). The instrument reveals conditions under which adults are more likely to produce, achieve, solve problems, and learn.

From the individual assessments, I looked for patterns between growth-seeking teachers and reluctant teachers. My supposition was that growth-seeking teachers have one set of learner characteristics whereas reluctant teachers have other characteristics. During the interviews, teachers were asked to describe themselves as learners, their attitudes toward change, and their degree of openness to learning and growing situations.

3. What is the relation between teachers' personality types and their behavior? Are certain types of people reluctant teachers?

I used three additional self-assessment instruments to categorize personality types. The first, the Gregorc Style Delineator, states that before teachers can grow professionally they must consider how they relate to the world, their style of teaching, and their behavior (Gregorc 1975). The Gregorc Style Delineator's origin stems from studies of Anthony Gregorc and associates who looked into the characteristics, mannerisms, values, and attitudes of teachers—master, above average, average, and marginal. Their findings reveal individual differences manifested in four channels. Although all of us have and use all four channels, Gregorc found that in each person only one or two channels predominate, drastically affecting the way the person learns (Gregorc and Butler 1984).

The Gregorc Style Delineator combines both perception and ordering functions. Our mind sees things in a mental, symbolic, intuitive, and emotional way (*abstract*) and in a realistic, direct, physical way (*concrete*). Those perceptions—abstract and concrete—describe opposite ends of the continuum. Our mind also orders information, knowledge, ideas, and concepts. That ordering can be done in a linear, step-by-step, methodical way (*sequential*) or a nonlinear, tangential, leaping manner (*random*).

The assessment instrument identifies patterns of style by combining both perception and ordering. The combination results in Concrete Sequential (CS), Abstract Sequential (AS), Concrete Random (CR) or Abstract Random (AR) (Guild and Garger 1985).

I hypothesized that teachers identified as reluctant teachers would fall into one predominant channel, whereas teachers identified as growth-seeking would fall into another.

The second instrument I used to determine the relation between teachers' personality types and behavior was the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, the most widely used instrument of personality testing for a nonpsychiatric population. Four separate dichotomies check preference dominance between growth-seeking and reluctant teachers. Personality typology was captured by looking at four polarities:

> *Extroversion/Introversion*: The dichotomy shows whether subjects prefer to focus on the world of people and things or the inner world of ideas and impressions.
>
> *Sensing/Intuition*: It reveals whether subjects prefer perceiving the world in factual, realistic ways, through the senses and concrete details, or indirectly, in inherent, imaginative ways such as hunches and abstractions.
>
> *Thinking/Feeling*: The scale indicates whether subjects tend to base their decisions on logic and objective analysis of cause and effect or on values and subjective evaluation of person-centered concerns.
>
> *Judgment/Perceptions*: The dichotomy indicates preference for ways

of dealing with the world. It reveals whether subjects prefer to adopt judgmental attitudes or understanding, open-minded, curious attitudes.

I predicted that growth-seeking and reluctant teachers would have distinctly different preference dominance. The Myers-Briggs served as a supporting source to the Gregorc Style Delineator.

The third instrument, the Tuckman Teacher Feedback Form (TTFF), provides information and analysis of teacher behavior along four dimensions: *creativity, dynamic* (energy plus dominance), *organized demeanor* (organization plus control), and *warmth and acceptance*. Those dimensions refer to teachers' means of interpersonal classroom management, that is, how they deal with issues of control, ambiguity, and interaction (Tuckman 1976).

The TTFF is a checklist that generates scores in the four dimensions. The instrument provides teachers with a picture of their "teacher behavior." Tuckman's (1976) studies indicate that (1) *creative* teachers allow students to do more structuring than do noncreative teachers, (2) *dynamic* teachers do more structuring of themselves and allow their students to do less question-asking than do nondynamic teachers, (3) *organized* teachers require more student responses and allow students to do less question-asking than do less organized teachers, and (4) students of *warm and accepting* teachers have more positive attitudes toward themselves and school than do students of less warm and accepting teachers (Tuckman 1976). I anticipated that growth-seeking teachers' behaviors would be grouped differently than reluctant teacher behaviors on the TTFF.

4. Will taking the four different self-assessment instruments provide insights and thereby increase teachers' likelihood to change? Will the additional information and understanding of self provide a departure point for change?

I believe teachers learn from personal insights gained through self-awareness and self-exploration activities. I hypothesized that the first step toward teacher change starts with activities that build an overall profile showing personality types, learning characteristics, and teacher behaviors.

During the interviews, teachers were asked to share their reactions to the self-assessment results. Teachers were asked to rate the value of taking self-assessment tests, along with weighing their potential to serve as a departure point for change. I was particularly interested to see the responses and reactions of the reluctant teachers to the self-assessments.

5. What past conditions or circumstances produced change (learning and growing) for teachers? Did cognitive dissonance play a role in that change process?

In the interviews, teachers reflected on past situations in their teaching careers that resulted in change. I looked for responses that indicated change

as an outgrowth of opportunity or change as a result of an imposed requirement.

Cross (1981), Lambert (1984), and Smith (1986) believe the creation of disequilibrium in adults generates significant learning and growing. Teachers were asked if changing their schedules, teaching assignment, grade levels, or even classrooms (that is, creating cognitive dissonance) created discomfort that resulted in change.

The Interviews

I planned extensive interviewing with each participant using a semi-structured three-part interview developed from the research questions. Using the interview questionnaire I asked each participant the questions about their backgrounds and why they teach. During this interview, I recorded their initial reaction to my telephone call along with their responses to the questions. At the end of the interview I arranged to meet individually with the teachers.

Second interviews covered the teachers' professional growth and concluded with a brief explanation of adult developmental stages. A large self-addressed, stamped manila envelope was left at the conclusion of interview two. The envelope contained literature on adult developmental stages that they were asked to read, along with the four self-assessment tests—the Gregorc Style Delineator, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, the Productivity Environmental Preference Survey, and the Tuckman Teacher Feedback Form. The teachers took the assessment tests privately and mailed them to me for scoring and interpretation.

Once scored, I contacted each teacher and arranged a final interview session with them to share the assessment results and to ask questions about adult developmental stages and self-assessment. All in all, participants were interviewed three times and took four self-assessment tests.

Before beginning the study, I anticipated the information from my interviews and self-assessment instruments would reveal distinct differences between growth-seeking teachers and reluctant teachers and illuminate why some teachers learn and grow and others do not. I expected the results to be "black and white."

Before looking at the study's findings, which contain some surprises, it is useful first to examine what other researchers and theorists have reported concerning adult development, adult learning, and staff development and teacher change.

Chapter 2

Factors That May Affect Change in Middle Adulthood

Krupp (1989) and Levine (1989) cite motivating aging staffs as a pressing issue in education. Middle-aged teachers face a critical period in their lives and careers as they move through their forties. Research and theory show middle adulthood to be a turbulent, painful period as individuals reassess their lives and evaluate their level of satisfaction. Middle adulthood poses challenges to teachers in growing and being optimistic about their aging or stagnating and being discouraged with their life's structure. Teachers face personal challenges and decide the degree of commitment they will make to their careers, growth, and productivity.

Identifying and understanding the developmental stages of teachers can provide insights when attempting to spark an aging staff. Levine (1989) believes adult developmental-stage theory offers a widened lens through which to view and understand human behavior. By identifying issues of adulthood, specific life tasks, and characteristic stances, teachers can place their own development in context and develop a framework for thinking about their lives. The additional awareness may serve as a potential motivator for teacher change. Unfortunately, adult development theory is not well known or widely used in schools. If awareness of adult developmental stages does influence teachers' receptivity to change, it should be acknowledged when planning professional growth activities.

Personnel who plan staff development must approach teachers as people and learners. My research generated data revealing teacher types and learning styles predisposed toward change. Understanding those factors aids in designing learning boundaries and targeting areas for staff development.

Finally, if staff development is to spark aging faculties, whole-group growth activities need to be replaced by individual growth activities. People learn and grow when they recognize there *is* a need for change. That recognition usually starts within each person. Since individuals need to value and work for change in themselves, I believe the use of self-assessment instru-

ments and personal reflection provides insights to teachers and increases their likelihood to change. My study attempted to discover whether increased self-awareness and self-understanding are important factors for consideration when school personnel plan professional growth activities.

The research can be useful in staff development strategies for experienced teachers. The goal is to move from confrontive, intensive intervention tactics to "people strategies," incorporating the understanding of developmental stages, learner types, and personality when working with teachers. The "people strategy" approach surfaces as a constructive and collaborative process that allows for reflection and self-understanding rather than deadly, intensive intervention.

Adult Developmental Stages

Psychologists and researchers view middle age as a distinct period in the adult life cycle, qualitatively different from other periods. For example, Levinson's *The Seasons of a Man's Life* looks at major "seasons" of adulthood and describes developmental phases. According to Levinson and others (1978), the adult life cycle

> has a particular character and follows a basic sequence....there is the idea of a process of going from a starting point (birth, origin) to a termination point (death, conclusion)....there is the idea of seasons: a series of periods or stages within the life cycle...each stage having distinctive characteristics.

Classic personality theorists indirectly address these seasons of adult development. Jung (1921/1971, 1950/1959) conceptualized the entire life cycle but paid close attention to "the second half of life." He uses the term *individuation* to describe the process of becoming uniquely individual. Maslow (1970) writes about individuation in terms of the "self" as he describes the hierarchy of human needs requiring fulfillment before the adult can "self- actualize." Robert Peck also addresses psychological development in the second half of life. His theory of mental flexibility versus mental rigidity states that too many adults become set in their ways, inflexible in their opinions and actions, and closed-minded (Neugarten 1968).

Erik Erikson (1963), another contributor to adult personality theory, outlines the "Eight Stages of Man," which discusses, in part, ego development in middle and late adulthood. At stage 7, the conflict between generativity and stagnation exists. An adult who is inclined toward generativity assumes responsibility for new generations and has a sense of contributing to the future. An adult functioning in ego stagnation is not growing, but bogged down and lacking in self-fulfillment. At stage 8, adults wrestle with ego integrity or despair. An adult with ego integrity accepts one's life as having been inevitable, appropriate, and meaningful, while an adult in despair views life as being too short and unfulfilling (Neugarten 1968).

Other theorists specifically pinpoint crucial developmental changes that occur in middle adulthood. Their works describe a series of adult developmental stages and identify them by using the terms "mid-life transitions," "seasons," "transformations," "passages," and "mid-life crisis" (Gould 1978, Krupp 1980, Levinson and others 1978, Sheehy 1977, Vaillant 1977). Sheehy's (1977) *Passages* outlines the predictable adult turning points or stages that she views as representative of internal unfolding and natural growth.

Sheehy's predictable movement from one stage to another became age-linked in a detailed study by Levinson and others (1978). Levinson and his colleagues developed a "life structure," identifying "the basic pattern or design of a person's life at a given time." His middle adulthood era, ages forty to sixty, contains midlife transition (ages forty to forty-five), entering middle adulthood (ages forty-five to fifty), and age-fifty transition (ages fifty to fifty-five). Levinson and colleagues believe crucial developmental change occurs in middle adulthood, the "season" where qualities of wisdom, judiciousness, and breadth of perspective ripen or become stagnate.

Levinson and colleagues (1978) identify problematic "tasks" associated with the midlife transition period. The first, terminating the era of early adulthood, involves reappraising the past. Individuals in midlife transition ask, "What have I done in my life?" They often face "de-illusionment," a reduction of illusion, and recognize long-held assumptions and beliefs about the world and self may not be true. Adults in midlife transition come to terms with their own mortality. By asking "What legacy do I want to leave?" individuals start building or modifying their adult structure.

A second task Levinson and colleagues see in midlife transition centers on the struggle between self and the external world. Adults in transition recognize their status in life, face reality, and consider alternatives. The researchers' findings indicate that for adults to make significant changes in midlife, they must individuate, modifying their dreams and personal myths about "Becoming One's Own Man." Levinson and his colleagues view middle adulthood as the stage with the most potential for adult growth and development. Here adults no longer reappraise the past but make choices about the future, which brings new meaning and commitment. According to Levinson and his associates, the middle-age stage serves as a source of renewal or stagnation.

Another study supporting middle age as a period of either growth or stagnation stems from Vaillant's (1977) "Metamorphoses in Adaptation and Defense," part of a thirty-five-year longitudinal investigation of Harvard men. Vaillant found the "pain of the forties" preparatory for entering a new stage of development. He notes that heightened self-awareness and liberation in the forties help achieve a sense of generativity and comfort in the fifties (Whitbourne and Weinstock 1986). Vaillant's research establishes that significant changes occur during adulthood in the adaption and adjustment behaviors of men. Mature, healthy, optimistic adults enjoy life to its fullest,

whereas less mature adults appear fearful, closed, and restrained in their views toward life.

Gould (1978) also views the midlife stage as a critical, vacillating phase of adult development. He describes the stage as one thrusting individuals between periods of "passivity, rage, depression and despair." The effect of such a process results in a transformation: "a deep self-renewal" when individuals gain new understanding of self and the meaning of life.

Chickering and Havighurst (1981) identify midlife transitions and middle adulthood as problematic. In their life cycle model, the midlife transition (ages thirty-five to forty-five) highlights change. Individuals search for meaning and often reassess marriage, family relationships, values, goals, and career plans. By middle adulthood (ages forty-five to fifty-seven), individuals adjust to the realities of work, usually attaining their highest status level. They find life full and satisfying or recognize their discontentment.

Relevance of Midlife Stages to Teacher Behavior

One researcher, Judy-Arin Krupp (1980), specifically studied the midlife transition of teachers. Krupp believes research on adult development "stages and ages" addresses the needs of older teaching staffs. Identifying and understanding the developmental stages of teachers provides insights when attempting to spark an aging staff, Krupp (1983) believes. She sees the forties as a time of massive self-reassessment, a time of unrest, questioning, and vulnerability (Krupp 1982). The key concerns for teachers in age forty transition (forty to forty-seven) lies with de-illusionment, individuation, and mortality (Krupp 1981).

De-illusionment manifests itself as teachers look at their careers and lose "their dream." Teachers think, "I have gone as far as I can." They wonder whether to change jobs, weighing the benefits of security, hours, free time, and pension plans against the risks. Teachers in forties transition perceive their careers as set, with little chance to make an occupational change. They mention "necessity" as the reason for staying in teaching (Krupp 1981). When disillusionment sets in, some teachers become on-the-job retirees. They lack involvement and direction, suffer through stages of doubt, feel a lack of control over events, become suspicious about unfair treatment, and exude pessimism about the future and their success in teaching.

Krupp (1981) also sees teachers in the forties transition going through an individuation process. Teachers who ask "Who Am I?" as part of their serious life review agonize over the answers. Nevertheless, teachers who do not review their values, goals, and moral and ethical beliefs during the forties transition could withdraw from life and become alienated. Finally, teachers in transition ponder their own mortality. They look at time left to live and prepare themselves for the future or fret about their stagnation and eventual death. During that stage, teachers think of their legacy. They may ask

themselves, "What do I want to leave?" or "How do I want to be remembered?"

Krupp (1983) contends the intensity of the forties transition makes or breaks later adult years (ages forty-seven and older). Teachers who successfully negotiate this transition experience a sense of stability and satisfaction in their lives and careers and respond with flexibility and openness to new situations. Other teachers, experiencing rough transitions, appear dissatisfied and unhappy (Krupp 1981).

Adults as Learners

An understanding of teachers as learners can be gleaned from the literature on adults as learners. Krupp (1982) defines the adult learner as one in the process of becoming aware of one's own identity. Adult developmental theory shows adults continuously growing and learning in stages and sequences throughout their lives (Krupp 1982, Sprinthall and Sprinthall 1987, Brookfield 1986). Lambert (1984) envisions adult learning as a journey and a struggle to be free from shackles that interfere with growth. Whitbourne (1986) sees learning new information and skills possible throughout adulthood regardless of the aging process.

Although teachers in their forties express negative attitudes toward structured learning activities, the midlife transition necessitates new learning opportunities (Cross 1981, Krupp 1982). Cross believes the transition naturally stimulates and challenges adults to pursue new knowledge and skills, which in the end accounts for the longest period for adult learning.

Furthermore, adult learning theorists view self-esteem as playing an important role in that learning process (Cross 1981, Krupp 1982, Lambert 1984). Cross (1981) believes adults need confidence in themselves to be ripe for learning. Krupp (1983) finds confident teachers open to growth and change. She discovered teachers with confidence display flexibility and receptiveness toward learning, whereas fearful, distrustful teachers appear rigid and doubtful about learning opportunities. Researchers also highlight the need for relevant and meaningful adult learning (Knox 1986, Krupp 1982). Lambert (1984) feels if the activity lacks assigned meaning, learning does not occur. She believes connecting individuals' meaningful personal experiences to learning activities encourages growth.

Another segment of educational research postulates that adult learning depends on personalities and motivation. Gregorc (1982), Lortie (1975), and Joyce and colleagues (1983) identify certain teacher types predisposed toward learning and growing. Wlodkowski (1985) believes attitudes, needs, stimulation, affect, competence, and reinforcement all factor into adult motivation.

It becomes important to recognize what research and theory say about adults as learners. Not only must school personnel understand the develop-

mental stages of teachers, they must also understand teachers' learning boundaries and needs. Teachers, as learners, demand their learning activities be valuable, relevant, and personal to their developmental stage. How and what teachers learn depends largely on their awareness of developmental stages, self-perceptions, orientation toward learning, and personality.

So why do some teachers continue to learn and grow through middle adulthood while others do no? I contend that adult developmental stages, individual learner characteristics, and professional growth experiences influence teachers' receptivity to new knowledge or new skills. I believe middle-aged teachers who ignore developmental stages, learner characteristics, and professional growth opportunities become reluctant teachers; they become hesitant, fearful, disinclined, and unwilling to learn and grow.

There may be several reasons for the existence of reluctant teachers. Sprinthall and Sprinthall (1987) believe the repetitive nature of teaching, doing the same thing over and over, adds to veteran teachers' discontent. Lortie (1975) believes teacher isolation, along with the lack of challenge, adds to that malaise. Reluctant teachers may appear in middle-age as the ones who stay disillusioned during and after their midlife transition. They remain unsuccessful in resolving "Who am I?" and "What have I accomplished?" and continue to vacillate between changing careers and life styles and not changing. According to Krupp (1981), reluctant teachers live with their discontent and remain in teaching for financial reasons and benefits.

Reluctant teachers use age as an excuse for not learning or changing careers. They may feel, "I'm too old to take that class," or "It doesn't matter at this point," or "I don't need the credit." Reluctant teachers retire, but remain in the classroom.

The research and theory on adult developmental stages and adults as learners indicates all adults, even middle-aged reluctant teachers, can learn and grow. Creating dissonance, looking at individual needs, allowing teachers to control their own learning, and providing evidence as reasons for change challenge teachers to move into more productive career and life stages. It is important for reluctant teachers to understand their own developmental stages and learning styles as the first step in moving from mental and emotional retirement back into, or completely out of, teaching.

Staff Development and Teacher Change

Staff development often becomes the avenue through which teachers learn and grow (or are expected to as the demands for individual teacher growth surface). Theories of adult development can be a means to understand what motivates professional growth.

Judy-Arin Krupp consults widely around the United States on "motivating experienced teachers." During one of her Portland visits, Krupp (1989) addressed the learning attitude of teachers. She believes that teachers

must be motivated to learn and grow and that a learning climate within schools needs to exist in order to encourage and promote teacher growth. Krupp feels school personnel (both teachers and administrators) must model life-long learning: "If we can't grow, we can't expect others to grow" (Krupp 1989). When life-long learning becomes a cultural norm within a school, teachers start seeing themselves as learners. Loucks-Horsley and others (1985) see teachers identifying themselves as learners as the cornerstone for professional growth. "For teachers to take on substantive change in beliefs, attitudes or behaviors they must be given a modified context where they can be learners first and teachers second."

Even within schools that have life-long learning as a primary norm and leaders who model learning, teacher change is not guaranteed. The issue of "change" itself, though the catalyst of staff development, appears as a formidable roadblock to many teachers. According to Shirley Hord (1989), "the only person who likes change is a wet baby." Krupp (1989) sees change as an inherent part of adult development and as an outcome of adult learning. Krupp (1989), a staunch supporter of teacher growth, says, "When things get comfortable it is time for change." Yet typically teachers resist change and are often hesitant to involve themselves in situations where change is expected. Because staff development programs aim at changing teachers' behaviors, one needs to look carefully at the "change process" in general, contend Hall and Loucks (1978).

Hord and associates (1987), developers of the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM), state that change is "a process, not an event, made by individuals first then institutions, a highly personal experience which entails development growth in feelings and skills." Teacher change then becomes personal, individual, and motivated by self-interest. March and Simon (1958) support that notion in their classic influence model study, which suggests individual change within an organization is due in large part to the individual's personal goals and cues from the work environment (appropriate socialization and work norms). March and Simon's theory reveals individual change is motivated in the direction of achieving valued rewards.

More recent studies by Ashton and Webb (1986) and Dembo and Gibson (1985) look at the rewards of teaching through intricate values or personal teaching efficacy. Research on teaching efficacy suggests teachers are more likely to adopt and implement changes if they have confidence in their own abilities to control their classrooms and affect student learning. Smylie (1988) feels the greater a teacher's personal teaching efficacy and confidence that their practice is appropriate and effective, the more likely teachers will be to change as a result of staff development. Smylie also contends that teachers who are adequately supported by administrators and peers are more likely to change than those who do not have such support.

Other researchers feel teacher change requires more than a strong sense of self-efficacy. Krupp (1989) believes teachers receive very little help with understanding the change process or managing change. She believes

teachers need such assistance in order to make changes. Griffin's (1983) studies indicate district or building resources must be present to support teacher growth and development. Besides material resources, implementing teacher changes requires supportive leadership and understanding of teacher perceptions, expectations, and experience levels.

Wu (1988) goes one step farther and states the importance of having a thorough understanding of the process of change. Drawing from Hersey and Blanchard (1982), Wu identifies four kinds of changes occurring with teachers: (a) changes in knowledge, (b) changes in attitudes, (c) changes in behavior, and (d) changes in group or organizational performance. Wu finds achieving change becomes more difficult when moving from (a) to (d). Citing earlier studies, Wu shows that successful change depends on input from those involved and their perceived need for the change. "Teacher inservice can be successful 100 percent of the time if programs are judged relevant by the learner (recipient group)."

As staff development becomes the most promising and most readily available route for growth on the job, specialists should tune in to the process of adult learning and growing. In 1980, Knowles introduced andragogy—the art of adult teaching—into the field of education. Along with Knowles, others started looking at adults as learners and what that means to staff development. Oja (1980), Krupp (1980), Bents and Howey (1981) and Levine (1989) connect adult learning with adult developmental theories and believe knowledge of adult growth and development becomes critical in planning staff development programs for teachers.

Summary

The desirability of having a constantly improving teacher corps underscores the pressing need to determine what moves teachers into change situations. The identification of factors influencing teacher growth and change can be helpful in working with aging staffs.

Although teachers ultimately control whether or not change occurs, district staff developers can influence the success of teacher change by providing time, support, and encouragement. Teachers who believe in their own competence and feel supported are more open to change. Prime consideration for district staff developers includes awareness of the institutional barriers to teacher learning, along with the acknowledgment teachers themselves decide whether to change their attitudes, skills, or knowledge.

Professional growth, then, comes full circle and results from a series of interactions between adult learning, the change process, adult development theories, and staff development activities. All those issues must be taken into consideration when trying to understand why some teachers learn and grow and others do not.

Chapter 3

Growth-Seeking versus Reluctant Teachers

Early in my study, I hypothesized that adult developmental stages, learner style, personality type, teacher attitude, and change conditions would reveal clear distinctions between growth-seeking teachers and reluctant teachers. Those five variables served as the basis of my research questions, probing into why some teachers learn and grow and others do not. I believed growth-seeking teachers would cluster in certain categories, whereas reluctant teachers would cluster in others. However, distinctions between the two groups were not as clearly delineated as I thought they would be.

The findings for each research question are discussed below, making a distinction between growth-seeking and reluctant teachers. I use a sample of direct quotations to capture the teachers' attitudes, values, and opinions about professional growth and development. First, however, several characteristics of the teacher sample are noted.

Characteristics of the Teachers

Making the initial telephone contacts with the potential subjects gave me an opportunity to categorize them into one of two teacher types—growth-seeking or reluctant—based on their responses. My gut-level reactions during that initial contact proved accurate. When asked for their assistance, growth-seeking teachers' responses included "Oh sure, I love to do things like that," or "Yes, that sounds like fun," or "You don't have to pay, especially if it is coming out of your own pocket."

Reluctant teachers, on the other hand, typically responded with questions such as "How much time will it involve?", "Can you call back after I talk with my wife," or "I'm babysitting my little daughter right now, will you call me at school?" Although all teachers agreed to participate, I felt growth-seeking teachers expressed genuine enthusiasm and interest, whereas reluc-

tant teachers seemed to agree because I made the process convenient, offered cash ($40), or, in some cases, because their building principal asked them to do it as a personal favor.

Career Choice

Ninety-four percent of growth-seeking teachers responded definitely "yes" when asked if they would select teaching as a career again, whereas only 56 percent of teachers who were classified as reluctant indicated they would select teaching as a career again.

Changing Career Considerations

Fifty percent of growth-seeking teachers said they considered changing careers at some point, whereas 88 percent of reluctant teachers said they considered changing jobs at some time, but time, money, or occupational retraining factors discouraged them from moving out of teaching. Twelve percent said they never considered a different occupation.

Work Satisfaction

Growth-seeking teachers responded they were 91 percent satisfied with their work. In comparison, the reluctant teachers were 76 percent satisfied with their jobs.

Question 1: Adult Developmental Stages and Teachers' Receptivity to Change

The first research question asked whether awareness of adult developmental stages influences teachers' receptivity to change and whether teachers in transition periods are more open to learning and growing opportunities.

Adults are continually growing and changing as they deal with developmental issues in their life cycles. Nevertheless, teachers typically are unaware of developmental theories and issues involved in their middle-aged developmental stages. If middle-aged teachers were given a developmental framework identifying issues of adulthood, specific life tasks, and characteristic stances, I wondered if they might develop new ways of viewing their experiences and if those new perspectives might propel them toward growth. Second, I wanted to discover if transition periods of adult development, often characterized in the literature as turbulent and problematic, thrust teachers into growth-producing situations.

The interview data revealed that 80 percent of growth-seeking teachers were previously aware of adult developmental stages compared to 50 percent

of the reluctant teachers. What I thought was a straight "yes" or "no" question was responded to differently by the two groups. Typical comments from the growth-seeking teachers were as follows:

> Well, a few years ago I read books like *Seasons of a Man's Life* and *Passages* for a class. Yes, I am aware of the stages, though I don't think about them very much.

> Yes. The thing that was interesting to me about this question is that being a teacher, I really focused on lower, younger age developments that were mentioned in here. I had never really paid much attention in my studies to the adult level. It wasn't as important to me at that time to know the adults stages compared to what the kids were doing. It was interesting to realize these people had even done adult studies, that it went all the way through adulthood. It wasn't new information, but it was interesting to see what people had talked about at a time like mid-life crisis.

Typical comments from reluctant teachers reveal a different level of knowledge about adult developmental stages:

> Yes.

> Yes, I was aware of them.

> Yes, vaguely aware of them, as I took a lot of psychology during my master's.

> Yes, I've seen them somewhere.

Although growth-seeking teachers (100 percent) and reluctant teachers (86 percent) agreed that understanding adult developmental stages would be helpful in their own professional and personal growth, the manner and depth to their responses proved remarkably different.

Growth-seeking teachers commented on the helpfulness of understanding adult developmental stages. The following three examples were typical:

> One of the things that came out of this was going back to work and talking to other people my age. Acknowledging we have a lot of people at our school this age and that we probably need to deal with what they're going through right now. That came out of this reading. I'm in the process of meeting with three people about addressing the issue at our school.

> I think we should. In fact, my first opinion is that we have to work with people in education more on a personal level as individuals. If people think you care about them they are going to work harder and better for you. We ought to do the same with the students. I think this should be extended downward. Have the faculty more aware of the same thing within the student as well as each other.

> Of course, I think anything that would help you be more introspective and know yourself better would be valuable.

On the other hand, four reluctant teachers commented as follows:

> I think it would be. It depends on their background and on their subject area. I'm giving you a vague answer. Let's say in our background social studies teachers would have more exposure to this than other teachers. I don't want to down-grade any one of the other disciplines, but that would be my suggestion. Suddenly if you take a class about life and the various stages, or for example I read and made reference to the book *Passages*, that would probably make you aware of the stages.

> Oh yes, I think so. I wouldn't limit it just to teachers. I think it would be helpful...I'm thinking about my parents, for instance. It would have been interesting for them. We live in a community of older people A lot of them would be interested in this kind of declaration.

> As a teacher, no it is not helpful. As an individual, yes. I don't think it has any bearing on whether one is a plumber or teacher or architect. One's vocation is irrelevant. The information is wonderful.

> It is possible. I don't think it's made a difference in my own case.

Growth-seeking teachers felt awareness of adult developmental stages helpful in understanding not only themselves but those with whom they work. Reluctant teachers did not articulate as readily the benefits such an understanding might have in their relationship with others.

Final comments recorded for research question 1 dealt with whether teachers in transition periods (defined as moving from one developmental stage to another) were more open to learning and growing. According to the literature, transition periods are turbulent and problematic, yet often result in growth-producing opportunities. Continuing with an interview format, I sought teachers' reactions to transition periods.

The findings indicate that for the majority of growth-seeking teachers (64 percent) and reluctant teachers (71 percent), transition periods were experienced as nontraumatic. One growth-seeking teacher aptly expressed herself:

> Traumatic? That is interesting you should say that, because there are so many things in my life that I heard were going to be traumatic. It didn't happen. I just moved slowly into it and then looked back and...this is what happened. I'm still not finding it traumatic. In fact, I find certain pleasurable things. I mentioned it last time we interviewed; what had happened was there were certain things that were easier when you get older. You are not quite so undecided about things. You become more definite. Then, in other things you become much more "grey," as opposed to black or white.

A reluctant teacher's response confirmed that perspective:

> I think I slid into these different levels pretty smoothly. I didn't

resist. I think it's one of my personality traits that I can ease into change and be flexible. I don't think it was traumatic.

I initially thought transition periods would prove to be the most growth producing for both growth-seeking and reluctant teachers.

In summary, data from question 1 showed awareness of adult developmental stages did not significantly influence teachers' receptivity to change nor did transitional periods necessarily result in growth.

Question 2: Relation between Learner Styles and Teacher Attitudes toward Change

Research question 2 asked, What is the relation between individual learner styles and teacher attitudes toward change? More specifically, do growth-seeking teachers have different learner characteristics than reluctant teachers? The Productivity Environmental Preference Survey (PEPS) assessed individual learning styles in *cognitive* (for example, motivation, persistence, responsibility) and *affective* (for example, likes to work with others, alone, in pairs) areas. Results from the survey indicated growth-seeking teachers do have different learner characteristics than reluctant teacher in the areas of persistence, motivation, authority-oriented learning, and structure.

In the area of persistence, growth-seeking teachers liked long-term assignments and needed little assistance, whereas reluctant teachers worked best with short-term assignments and frequent feedback. In the area of motivation, growth-seeking teachers worked and learned under their own self-direction and initiative, whereas reluctant teachers needed closer supervision and uncomplicated tasks. Growth-seeking teachers perceived a need for close monitoring and supervision, whereas reluctant teachers felt they can work on their own. Finally, growth-seeking teachers tended to need less structure in terms of direction and expectations than reluctant teachers. Growth-seeking teachers appreciated professional growth activities more than reluctant teachers as evidenced by their commitment, openness, and need for learning and growing.

I wondered if growth-seeking teachers had different attitudes or opinions about their own learning and growing than reluctant teachers. In an attempt to address that query, I asked two questions: Do you feel continual professional growth as a teacher is part of your job description? and Are you responsible to provide growth-producing activities for yourself as a teacher or is your principal/district responsible? Teachers' answers would help to determine their sense of responsibility for their learning and growing.

In response to the question concerning professional growth as part of teachers' job descriptions, 87 percent of the growth-seeking teachers and 93 percent of the reluctant teachers answered, "Yes, absolutely." As to who was responsible to provide the growth-producing activities, 67 percent of the

growth-seeking teachers and 71 percent of the reluctant teachers replied it was a shared (combined) responsibility of the teachers and the districts. Thirty-three percent of the growth-seeking teachers felt professional growth was their own responsibility, whereas 29 percent of reluctant teachers considered it to be their responsibility. Although both types acknowledged the importance of professional growth along with the combined responsibility of teachers and districts for promoting it, noticeable differences existed in the attitudes of teachers, as evidenced by their comments.

Two growth-seeking teachers gave the following responses to the question whether they or the principal/district is responsible to provide growth-producing activities:

> There is plenty of support from the district. Our district does an exceedingly good job of encouraging their people to seek professional growth. Building principals have always been good about that, too. They are real good about letting us know about workshops and that sort of thing. The district has always been good with providing money. Yes, there has definitely been incentive on the job. I don't have to spend too much time in thinking about it or not, because now it very seldom comes out of my pocket. From that point of view it is really great. Especially in the early years when you didn't have a lot of money anyway.

> It is a combination. A good district is interested in a teacher's continued growth and will provide, usually, quite a banquet of opportunities. We have had in our district during the last few years numerous available workshops and inservices. I've received personal recommendations from principals and superintendents to go to workshops around the state. Others have come to my notice through my professional organizations.

Two reluctant teachers' replies on shared responsibility for professional growth were as follows:

> Only in the sense if they want more development in the areas of such things as methodology, cooperative learning techniques...like that. To me that is not exactly what I consider professional growth. I like to be interested in the topic I work on. So I do that on my own entirely. To me that is professional growth and not learning what the latest techniques are, although I feel obligated to do that. I took the workshops on cooperative learning, but it's not definitely something that I'm intrigued by.

> I don't know about principals, but I feel it is the teachers' and the district's. If the district requires it, it should be up to them when they want us to teach a particular thing. They should then provide it and not expect us to spend our money and our time. That, to me, is not necessary. If they are going to introduce a new course or say to teach a particular way, then they should provide that for you.

Growth-seeking teachers' comments reflected an attitude of appreciation for their principals' or districts' providing professional growth activities. I sensed the teachers felt they were lucky to have encouragement from administrators to attend workshops, classes, or conferences and also with the districts' resources to provide for the time, fees, or classes. The reluctant teachers, on the other hand, expressed a hard-life approach to professional development, that is, if the district wants it, they better provide the time and money. I also got the feeling reluctant teachers would rather select their own learning opportunities than have a principal/district direct them to certain workshops or classes. I did not sense gratitude or appreciation for learning opportunities but instead a sense of entitlement.

Question 3: Relation between Personality Types and Teacher Behavior

Research question 3 asked, What is the relationship between personality types and teacher behavior? Are certain types of people reluctant teachers?

Three out of the four self-assessment tests failed to show any relationship between personality types and teacher types, that is, growth-seeking or reluctant. Neither teacher type surfaced in a dominant category on the three instruments.

Question 4: Self-Assessment Tests as a Departure Point for Change

Research question 4 asked, Will taking the four different self-assessment instruments provide insights and increase teachers' likelihood to change? Will the additional information and understanding of self provide a departure point for change?

Using the interview questions, teachers were asked to share their reactions to the results of the self-assessments. One question asked the teachers to respond to whether the results proved insightful or confirming. Two other questions probed the likelihood of assessment tests causing change and serving as a departure point for change. The final question asked teachers to rate the value of using self-assessment instruments.

One hundred percent of the growth-seeking teachers and 93 percent of the reluctant teachers felt the four assessment tests' results confirmed what they already knew about themselves and did not offer new insights. The real difference between the teacher types was reflected in their comments whether such confirmation would increase their likelihood to change. Fifty-seven percent of growth-seeking teachers answered "yes"; for example, two teachers said,

> Yes, it will help me focus and watch myself when I'm doing things. Whether I'm making a judgment or bouncing from one thing to the next. It can change me. I think self-assessment is important because it gives you your learning styles and the type of person that you are. To reassure yourself, that might be of benefit, especially if you want to change.
>
> I think it would be likely to change me. There are some things that I really don't like, so it made me take another look at myself.

On the other hand, 83 percent of the reluctant teachers said they did not feel the confirmation from the assessment tests would increase their likelihood to change. Also, a feeling that there was no need to change was evident in some of their comments, as the following examples reveal:

> I see no need to change. I am perfectly content the way I am. I don't think change is an issue.
>
> No. I guess what I'd have to do is see a reason to change. Hopefully, the whole world is happy with themselves. I'm not so aged to think they are not. I hope that you are happy with yourself. If there were something about yourself that you don't like, hopefully you are mature enough and have enough control of yourself to change it. I think the person is what they are and what they make themselves. That's about it.
>
> I'm not sure any of those things are going to be necessarily responsible for confirming my likelihood to grow.
>
> I could probably answer that yes and no. Yes if I were still looking down the road of where I am right now. I'm not looking down the road that far, so it's almost a no.

As for self-assessment tests serving as a departure point for change, both types of teachers agreed in the affirmative (93 percent of the growth-seeking and 90 percent of the reluctant teachers). Although agreeing in general about the usefulness of self-assessments in stimulating change, the two kinds of teachers' personal reasons behind such thoughts varied widely. One teacher in the growth-seeking group responded:

> Yes. For one, in terms of making me think about how I view the world, at least. You've made me very aware, for instance, in curriculum. Why I value certain things, versus someone else. I think it might open some doors for some sharing of ideas. I could see a whole new setting for discussing ideas in science curriculum between myself and the rest of my staff based on understanding how each one of us functions and places our values and how we come to our conclusions....As far as being valuable in looking for change, I think the minute you better understand the position you are in then you are better able to see where you could go from that position. So I would say definitely yes.

A teacher classified as reluctant said,

> I think they can, once again, once you know who you are. If you need to see a need for change, there has to be some reason to change or to mutate and become something else. As we go through life we all mutate to a degree, we all do become something else. There has to be some positive outcome for me, or there would be no need for me to change.... I would tend to think more that the changes that are going to affect my life in the future are going to be more outside of the profession, rather than inside. An example is family, advent of children growing up and leaving the home. Moving geographically is very possible. Once that occurs, maybe the option for professional change would be in place.

The value of teachers' using self-assessment instruments generated quite a range of opinions for both groups. On the whole, the largest percentage of growth-seeking teachers (58 percent) judged the value of using self-assessment tests as "high." In contrast, only 15 percent of reluctant teachers placed a "high" value on self-assessment tests.

In sum, both teacher types said the self-assessments confirmed what they already knew about themselves and did not offer any new insights. Nevertheless, a majority of the growth-seeking teachers felt the self-assessment test results would increase their likelihood to change, whereas the majority of the reluctant teachers said the tests would not increase their likelihood to change. Both groups agreed self-assessment tests can serve as a departure point for change, but expressed in varying degrees the value of teachers' using the tests for such a purpose.

Question 5: Conditions Producing Change for Teachers and the Role of Cognitive Dissonance

The final research question attempted to target past conditions or circumstances that stimulated teacher learning and growth. The question also tried to delineate the role cognitive dissonance played in that change process. I asked teachers to reflect on past situations in their careers that resulted in change. Specifically I asked: In thinking back, what activities caused you to significantly change in your teaching? Describe situations or conditions during your teaching career in which change occurred. Tell me how you felt about the change at the time. Did changing classrooms, grade levels, or buildings (creating cognitive dissonance) cause change? and What single factor has been most influential in your own growth?

Up to this point the data had not overwhelmingly supported my hypotheses. In the analysis of the conditions or circumstances producing change for teachers, however, there was a clear distinction between growth-producing situations for growth-seeking teachers and those of reluctant teachers. On the whole, growth-seeking teachers reflected on activities that caused significant change as positive, rewarding, stimulating, and necessary

for their continual growth. Some of the activities producing change were directly related to supporting and encouraging relationships with colleagues, as one high school growth-seeking teacher so aptly described:

> Collegial work can be very energizing. It takes a lot of time, especially if it is properly organized. But studies, research, reading materials, and bringing together the very best thinking that you can on a particular topic usually transfers into activities and teaching strategies. Those are some of the things I very much like. I also liked the time the district gave us to be away from classes for growth. Usually you do it on weekends or summer, or after 4:00 p.m. That has been very positive that they allow us during work time to enhance our own professional lives. In one instance, maybe ten of us attended Marylhurst for two days with the Positive Attitude Toward Learning people from Iowa. What it was doing was simply taking away some of the mythology of how people are evaluated, how you can assess your own teaching style and strategy, and how kids learn. We began to get into each others' classrooms. It was very freeing and genuinely a learning experience. But it was founded on peers. Really kind of a forerunner, I'd say, with what today's people call peer coaching. That was one I thought was very positive. It changed some of us very much. We began to be more concerned with particular questioning of strategy, with how we responded to students in the classroom. We were aware there were things we could do to make a difference and we did it as a group.

A special collegial relationship that caused significant change occurred between two elementary growth-seeking teachers:

> When I first started teaching here another teacher and I worked together and hit it off very well. We started brainstorming. We both taught fourth grade, so we put together units for teaching pioneer and Oregon history. We worked up a curriculum that would knock your socks off! We really loved working together. We would make an outline of what we felt was important to fourth graders and worked together on filling it in. Wherever she was at a time, I would be there too. We would help each other. When she quit to have a baby I just about died. It was very hard to pick up myself and continue on my own. It wasn't as much fun. And the person that replaced her definitely wanted nothing to do with the things we had done. It was depressing.

In contrast, only two reluctant teachers commented that relationships caused significant change in their teaching. An elementary teacher described the role her principal played in her teaching career. And another reluctant teacher, a middle-school math teacher, said:

> I picked up teaching styles from colleagues and I think that is important. Having worked on summer curriculum projects, I had a chance to learn from colleagues. Those have been valuable experiences.

Growth-seeking teachers frequently placed high value on their interactions with peers and other professionals, whereas reluctant teachers did not value such relationships as much.

Other activities that caused significant change in teachers' teaching occurred because of curriculum exposures, changes, or new adoptions. Growth-seeking teachers naturally integrate the new curriculum into their classrooms because they value it over the old. Specific training in Success in Reading and Writing, along with participation in Onward to Excellence, brought this elementary teacher to say:

> Knowledge is power. "Success" really opened up my curriculum. I teach very differently. I don't have reading groups and don't structure them. The curriculum is wide open, all integrated. As far as Onward to Excellence, that affected me by going through all the research on effective schools. It really impacted me on lots of different levels— discipline, curriculum and assessment. It would be hard to name all the areas that I've had impact in from workshops.

Growth-seeking teachers displayed a forward-looking attitude toward the benefit of curriculum causing change in their teaching. They embraced new curriculum as an opportunity. Reluctant teachers also viewed curriculum activities as causing significant change, but they saw curriculum activities as burdensome, yet another obligation.

One elementary reluctant teacher spoke of this obligation in describing how a different reading adoption significantly changed his teaching:

> My teaching changed drastically because of Whole Language. It was a mandate of the district that we not use textbooks as much but use the Whole Language approach. That was not a personal choice but it certainly has been a restructuring of my teaching. I would not have willingly changed.

A second elementary teacher acknowledged that district-offered classes forced him to change as a teacher:

> I've taken ITIP classes provided by the district. Those are required. They want everyone in the district to teach using ITIP. We have Classroom Management, which is a follow-up of ITIP. Everyone except new teachers had those. The new teachers are required to take them. It was mandatory for the veterans. They provided a sub for the classroom; one day a week they took teachers from a certain grade level, next week the next group. Two weeks later you went back and so on. It was a revolving thing all year. The district paid for the subs. The same subs revolved from building to building. ITIP, Classroom Management and Assertive Discipline were influential as far as changing me as a teacher, but remember, I was required to change. Right now we are doing Cooperative Learning. It is not required, yet they would like you to take it. So far I have not taken it.

Activities causing significant change for growth-seeking teachers

revolved around collegial interactions and embracing new curriculum offerings. For reluctant teachers, mandated adoptions and required district courses forced them into change activities.

Next, moving from activities producing change to situations or circumstances producing change, the sharp difference between growth-seeking teachers and reluctant teachers remained unmistakable. Growth-seeking teachers embraced learning and growing situations and adopted change as a positive outgrowth of their professional development. Reluctant teachers view change as something imposed on them or done to them, often times resulting in bad feelings and negative reactions. I used three examples to compare the responses of growth-seeking teachers and reluctant teachers to change-producing situations.

Both types of teachers described situations during their careers in which change occurred as "gradual" or "evolutionary." A growth-seeking teacher, for example, made the following comments:

> Change for me has been so gradual over the years and comes with changes in the people I have to work with, changes in grade levels and teaching technique. That constant, yet gradual change is probably the thing that has kept me in education. I've had to change every three to four years. I can't stand doing any one particular thing for very long. Those situations kept me fresh and interested.

A reclutant teacher made the following comments about change during his career in teaching:

> What I am today has been accomplished in a very gradual manner. Good or bad—I'm not sure which it is. I haven't had any real trauma to change my direction or style. I've been pretty much the same from the very beginning of my teaching career. As I stated to you, I don't think I've changed much over the years. My change would be low. There's possibilities that I do need to change, but once you get my age the effort it takes might be too much for me, to tell you the truth. (He is 47 years old.)

Teachers' responses to mandated change were also interesting. For example, one growth-seeking teacher stated,

> The situations that occur just by being in this district with declining enrollment and by subject matter assignments have affected me so much. When I first came here I was teaching straight speech. I was very comfortable in that because that's what I was trained to do. Then over the years, as the enrollment declined and the curriculum has altered, there have been fewer and fewer speech classes. It is now strictly an elective program. I had to pick up English. So for a long time I was kind of picking up the extra English classes in sophomores, freshmen, juniors, back to freshmen and back to sophomores again. That has been the thing that has compelled me to learn—is that I keep having to adapt to new subject matter all the time. That, in turn, has compelled me as a professional to go on and get some

additional clock hours of course and college work to be able to buffer some of those areas of weaknesses when I knew I was going to have to teach a particular level.

(How did you feel about the change at the time?) I love it. It's been good. It's been excellent for me. I don't really like teaching the same thing all the time, although speech has been a constant. I have taught that one particular kind of thing all the way through. The English I enjoyed—moving around on that subject matter. Primarily because then I know what the kids have had when I get them in an older level, or what they are going to have to have if I have them as a freshman. It's given me a better concept of what the whole department is doing. I think I'm really privileged in that regard. A number of my colleagues who are excellent, but have been in that one subject for so long, they really don't know what the rest of the department looks like.

Following is a reluctant teacher's comment concerning change that is mandated by the district:

I think I changed drastically after taking counseling courses and becoming a counselor—then going back into the classroom again. I counseled for twelve years then went back to the room. I think my techniques in dealing with kids have changed. I'm trained as a P.E. teacher and my work has been P.E. and counseling. I'm now teaching math! That makes quite a difference!

(Tell me how you felt about the change at the time.) That is kind of a sore point. They closed out a counseling position back then. I was not given an option. I had some math background, so I could teach math. I got math and the other person got to stay in counseling. At the time, I was extremely angry and hurt. Now, I see it was the best thing for me. The paperwork and the job in counseling now really isn't counseling. They don't have time to do it, so I lucked out. But I felt very angry and very let down. I'd had a lot of training to be a counselor and a lot of hours in college courses in practicum to have it wiped out. So now both my training in P.E. and counseling aren't being used.

As a result of imposed changes, growth-seeking teachers made the best of them and used the opportunity to learn and grow. They also moved on and did not belabor the situation. Reluctant teachers had the opposite reaction, continuing to harbor resentment and criticism toward the district (or principal) while doing what they were told to do.

In sum, clear differences surface in conditions producing change for growth-seeking and reluctant teachers. Growth-seeking teachers cited the significance of collegial relationships, new curricular opportunities, and imposed district directives as eventually positive and beneficial to them as professionals. Reluctant teachers talked, instead, of curriculum mandates and "do or die" ultimatums that carried years of unresolved resentment. At

least both groups did agree the creation of disequilibrium (changing classrooms, grade levels, subject matter, or buildings) did cause change. Eighty percent of growth-seeking teachers answered affirmatively, compared to 63 percent of reluctant teachers. By now, the lower percentage with the reluctant teachers should not be a surprise, as their general attitude toward change was reserved and guarded.

The last finding disclosed the value and attitude teachers had toward collegial relationships, curriculum changes, district mandates, and their own personal growth. Those values and attitudes determined teachers' association with either growth-seeking or reluctant categories.

Summary of Findings

Data gathered in response to the five research questions did not fully support the study's hypotheses, but did clearly reveal differences between growth-seeking and reluctant teachers. First, the research data showed awareness of adult developmental stages did not significantly influence teachers' receptivity to change nor did transitional periods offer growth-producing activities.

Second, the learner characteristics of growth-seeking teachers differed from those of reluctant teachers in the areas of persistence, motivation, authority-oriented learning, and structure. Growth-seeking teachers also had more of an appreciation for professional growth activities than did reluctant teachers. Also, growth-seeking teachers displayed more commitment, openness, and need for learning and growth than did reluctant teachers.

Third, the use of three self-assessment instruments—the Gregorc Style Delineator, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, and the Tuckman Teacher Feedback Form—did not support any type of relationship between personality types and teacher types, that is, growth-seeking or reluctant. Neither growth-seeking teachers nor reluctant teachers clustered in any dominant categories on the instruments used in the research.

Fourth, the results of teachers' self-assessment tests confirmed what teachers already knew about themselves and did not provide new insight. A majority of growth-seeking teachers felt the self-assessment test results would increase their likelihood to change; a majority of reluctant teachers felt the results would not increase their likelihood to change. Both teacher types agreed the use of self-assessment instruments could serve as a departure point for change, but differed in the value they placed on the use of the instruments for such a purpose.

And finally, the value and attitude teachers had toward collegial relationships, curriculum changes, district mandates, and their own personal growth were associated, to a large degree, with whether or not they sought to grow and change.

Chapter 4

Some Surprises

Given the interview data and analyses of the self-assessment results, what can be said about why some middle-aged, experienced teachers continue to learn and grow and others do not? What conclusions can be drawn?

First, I believed if teachers had a better understanding of where they are and who they are in terms of adult developmental stages and self-awareness, that information would make them more receptive to change. My hypothesis did not pan out. In fact, the findings did not support earlier research studies that found transition periods turbulent and problematic and thus growth producing. Most striking was the nontraumatic transition periods for both teacher types.

Second, I expected growth-seeking teachers to possess major differences in learning preferences. Although a few significant differences appeared in persistence, motivation, authority-oriented learning, and structure, I initially thought growth-seeking teachers would surface as peer-oriented learners with very specific learning preferences, that is, visual, auditory, tactile, or kinesthetic.

Third, I had a hunch that the growth-seeking and reluctant teachers would congregate in certain categories and reluctant teachers in others on the Gregorc Style Delineator and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. What proved interesting was that I successfully characterized the teachers into the two types after the first phone interview based on a subjective, gut-level reaction. My intuition proved correct, yet I had no evidence (assessment test data) to support it.

Fourth, I anticipated growth-seeking teachers would have positive attitudes toward their careers and toward life-long learning and growing. I assumed reluctant teachers would mouth the same attitudes but with a lesser degree of commitment and enthusiasm. That hypothesis was supported by the data.

Overall, my data did not significantly support my hunches. The differences between growth-seeking teachers and reluctant teachers did not turn out to be black and white. Ultimately, the unexpected and unanticipated

findings proved more meaningful and noteworthy than the "tested" data.

Unexpected Findings

In conducting this research project, I expected the whole process to be cut and dried. I originated the problem, a real one for me, came up with research questions, and proceeded in a very systematic way to collect the data. Drawing on my past counselor training and experience, I felt confident in putting my subjects at ease and in feigning sincerity and interest. This eminent task and my burning desire for completion was foremost in my mind. I played the role of researcher to the hilt and had purposeful interviews resulting in full transcripts. Yet somewhere along the line, and fairly close to the beginning, I sat back and started listening to what teachers said.

The Value of Reflection

The willingness of most teachers to cooperate in my research endeavors surprised me. Although I had to do more convincing with the reluctant teachers, all eventually gave up their time to meet. Scheduling ninety-six interviews over a three-month period required cooperation and flexibility on everyone's part. I realized my persistence factored in, but once in progress, there was little reluctance about talking.

And talk is what they did. Having been around educators for seventeen years, I was aware that teachers tend to be very verbal. Even so, I was surprised at how much they had to tell me. Maybe being a total stranger with no connection to their past or future made talking easy and safe. Anyway, all the teachers had opinions to share, stories to tell, and beliefs to profess. All wanted to share their experiences and their feelings. It was as if no one had ever seriously asked them what they thought.

My cocky attitude faded fast after sitting through a few interviews where my emotions became hard to control from hearing heartwarming stories of educational successes or of painful struggles to survive. Was I the first who really listened, recorded, and analyzed their thoughts? The experience became humbling. At times I felt privileged to hear their words.

The tide turned as my role of researcher changed to that of listener, supporter, and confessor. I gained a tremendous amount of admiration and respect for teachers generally and *that* was not something I expected to learn. I also learned how little opportunity we administrators give teachers for talk and serious reflection. I learned the value of structuring time for teachers to share, for by middle-age they have a wealth of experience.

Agreement on Staff Development

Another unexpected thing I learned concerned staff development. In a

surprising turn of events, growth-seeking teachers and reluctant teachers shared common feelings on what works and what does not. All teachers believed that any district staff development activity should have direct application to their classroom in either enrichment or practice. Both types of teachers agreed on this prerequisite because they had sat through too many "meaningless, wasteful, and worthless" district-sponsored classes or in-services. One teacher said, "Can you imagine three hours a week for nine weeks of nothing?"

Both groups agreed courses, workshops, and conferences taken by choice and based on interest usually turned out to be most beneficial. Frequently mentioned were Success in Reading and Writing, Math in the Mind's Eye, and Cooperative Learning. On the other hand, mandated district classes, especially ITIP and Assertive Discipline, received poor reviews from both groups, even after admitting the content was valid.

Growth-seeking teachers and reluctant teachers viewed time and opportunity for teachers to study, learn, or work with each other as a premium. "Group work" or "teamwork" appeared to be a rarity and was highly coveted by staff as a way to break down teacher isolation.

Reluctant teachers contributed the need for "teacher-initiated classes" instead of district-directed ones. Reluctant teachers mentioned staff development might be more successful if administrators "encouraged and promoted teachers to take certain classes." Finally, reluctant teachers also spoke of the need for administrators to give more attention to "academic years" or sabbaticals as a way of encouraging staff development.

I learned that learning and growing is very personal and hard to dictate. I came to believe teachers need I.E.P.s, Individual Education Plans, much like our special needs students, dictating a prescription for learning based on the individual teacher's strengths and weaknesses. I learned teachers do not like being told what to do or what to learn. The importance of the empowerment factor, the right and responsibility of teachers to decide what to learn based on their interests and needs, became obvious during the interviews.

A Catalog of Teachers' Wisdom

In a final attempt to find out why some teachers learn and grow and others do not, I asked as a closing question, "Is there anything else you would like me to know regarding teachers' learning and growing, any attitudes or opinions? This is your last chance to editorialize. What should I know?" An array of responses, some spoken with brevity and thought, others lengthy and emotional, led me to develop the following categories, which summarize what I learned.

1. I felt a tremendous amount of admiration and respect for *all* teachers, both growth-seeking and reluctant.

2. I realized how little opportunity teachers had for serious talk and reflection.
3. Staff development activities proved successful when they can be applied directly and easily to the classroom setting.
4. Staff development activities that were teachers' choices received more support than district-mandated classes.
5. Teachers would like the opportunity to work more closely with their peers.
6. Learning and growth for teachers depend to a certain degree on personality, motivation, perceived need, and interest.
7. Teachers need a variety of experiences during their careers to sustain learning and growth.
8. District administrators should consider requests from teachers for staff development activities and not just mandate inservices or classes.
9. Administrators need to encourage and support teachers in their professional development activities.
10. Professional growth comes from talking and working with other teachers.
11. Teachers feel they should be treated as professionals.
12. Teachers perceive "barriers" exists that inhibit change.
13. Teachers' attitudes toward change are a major factor in their learning and growing.

The Role of Gender

The final unexpected result emerging from my research pertained to gender. I did not have a particular hypothesis on that, thinking it would not be a factor. Yet, as a matter of curiosity a gender analysis was run as part of the statistical program. There turned out to be a significant unexpected difference. A Chi-Square analysis of gender by teacher type (growth-seeking or reluctant) showed females emerging as 88 percent growth-seeking, whereas 75 percent of the males were reluctant. Also, female teachers were significantly more dynamic (TTFF) and persistent (PEPS) than male teachers and preferred more of a tactile learning mode (PEPS) than males.

What was even more interesting was comparing the gender factor to adult developmental stages. Middle-aged, experienced male teachers tended to characterize their own adult developmental stages as a time of settling down and mellowing, that is, capping their career and accepting and adjusting to life as it is. In contrast, middle-aged, experienced female teachers spoke of becoming one's own person and focusing, for the first time, on

themselves and their careers. Gender, for better or worse, became a prevalent factor in my research.

An interesting side point was the sex of the administrators who referred the teachers. I asked them for an equal number of growth-seeking and reluctant teachers *only* and did not give instructions regarding the gender of teachers that they were to refer. However, both female and male administrators identified and referred more women as growth-seeking and more men as reluctant.

What that unexpected finding tells me is that gender does make a difference in schools, as in any organization. We need to look and be knowledgeable about how male and female roles influence the school organization.

The Researcher's Personal Growth

Listening to teachers talk about their experiences had a profound influence on me at the personal level. I heard too much about what we (as administrators) do wrong. Digesting that information, usually by writing about it, led me to recognize what I can do differently in my administrative behavior and opened new doors for change within myself. I did not expect to learn and grow so much personally. I did not anticipate I would look at changing any values. I did not foresee a need to think differently about the teachers with whom I work. The scope of my research project caused me to see behaviors and attitudes I do not like in myself and move me toward reevaluating and reassessing how I work with people.

I do have a sense now of why some teachers learn and grow and others do not. I can grasp reasons behind why some teachers become reluctant. Teacher growth and change becomes closely connected to the process of learning and changing itself. Teachers must want to learn, they must come to the learning experience by choice with a purpose in mind and a need. Teachers demand learning to be problem-centered, addressing areas of concern with practical steps for resolution or remediation. For teachers to change, they need to see the results of their efforts and have some sense of success. Finally, teachers must be allowed to draw on their own wealth of experiences in addressing professional growth activities.

Administrators Define Growth-Seeking and Reluctant Teachers

I concluded my research project by returning to the seven administrators who provided me with the names of the growth-seeking and reluctant teachers. I confirmed with them my own classification of the teachers into the two groups. At the same time, though, I sought their own reasons for identifying the teachers as either growth-seeking or reluctant. One of the elementary principals answered:

> Growth-seeking teachers are *always, always* interested in ways to do

things better. They have high expectations for kids, but higher ones for themselves. Growth-seeking teachers are confident in what they do but realize there might be better ways to learn. Teachers like this have a willingness to change; they want to learn. Growth-seeking teachers thrive on collaboration and are not threatened by others.

Reluctant teachers put their energies into other things than teaching. They can be okay or even strong teachers, but they tend to contribute less and not collaborate. Reluctant teachers usually have firm opinions about what is the best way to teach. They don't look at change as growth producing but as a negative condition because effort is required. Reluctant teachers are comfortable with the way everything is right now.

A middle school principal added:

Growth-seeking teachers are the long-range seekers, seeking new ideas and new strategies to teach better.

Reluctant teachers lack ambition and coast through the year without seeking new information or ideas. Reluctant teachers don't spend time outside their classroom promoting education.

One high school principal concurs with the other principals by stating:

If you stood people up with signs saying "future" and "past," the growth-seeking teachers would be holding the "future" signs. Growth-seeking teachers, no matter what their age, look forward to the future and attempt to find meaning in order to do a better job with the kids.

Reluctant teachers, however, give off the impression that there isn't a whole lot more to learn. They give up asking questions, as they have their lives well in hand. Reluctant teachers look at the past and avoid what is coming. Their stance is "this is the way it is."

Recommendations

Reluctant teachers will continue to populate our teaching ranks, yet administrators and staff developers can make inroads into their world of comfort by incorporating the following recommendations.

1. Reluctant teachers respond to attention when couched through a nonthreatening vehicle and provided support. Seventy-nine percent of the reluctant teachers said the interviews and self-assessment tests caused them to stop, think, and evaluate what they are doing and why. One teacher said, "No one ever asks my opinion and I have lots of feelings and ideas to share." We need to provide opportunities for teachers to self-reflect.

2. The fear of failure teachers feel needs to be replaced with encouragement by peers and administrators, with experimentation and trying new things.
3. Administrators should rethink job entrenchment and devise schedules and assignments reflecting flexibility and mobility so teachers can experience several different work environments and teaching levels.
4. Knowledge is power; districts need to promote teacher leadership, either through site-based management, collaborative work teams, or shared decision-making as teachers need to feel valued as professionals.
5. Learning and growing is very personal for all teachers, both growth-seeking and reluctant teachers, and should be addressed on an individual basis.
6. Additional research needs to be done on the gender issue. Further studies could indicate whether middle-aged reluctant teachers are predominantly male while pinpointing their adult developmental stage as a gender factor.

There is a special need to attend to middle-aged, experienced teachers, because they dominate our school staffs and educate thousands of students every year. Conversations and activities encouraging reflection on who and where they are can serve to promote their learning and growing.

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